REFUGEE WOMEN FACTSHEET

THE SITUATION IN 1991

- It is estimated that there are over 15 million refugees world-wide, living in almost 100 countries. At least 75 per cent of them are women and children. In some countries, women and children constitute 90 per cent of refugees.
- Millions of refugee families are headed by women.
- Some 6.8 million refugees are in Asia, 4.6 million in Africa, over 1 million each in North America and in Latin America, and about 1 million in Europe and Oceania.
- Afghan refugees constitute the world's largest group: some 3.2 million in Pakistan and 2.8 million in Iran, according to government figures.
- Palestinians constitute the second largest group: 2.3 million, living in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
- Africa has 4.6 million refugees. Among them, 1.3 million are from Ethiopia, 1.1 million from Mozambique, 468,000 from Angola, 438,000 from the Sudan and 388,000 from Somalia.
- It is estimated that the number of people fleeing Iraq and Kuwait could reach 1.5 million.

WHAT THE UN AND NGOs HAVE DONE TO HELP

1949. The UN General Assembly established the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

1951. The General Assembly established the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to protect refugees world-wide.

1979. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which contains specific references to refugee women, was adopted.

1980. UNHCR presented its first report devoted to refugee women at the World Conference on Women, in Copenhagen, which marked the mid-point of the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1976-1985).

1982. The UN Border Relief Operation was created to provide humanitarian relief to displaced Cambodians living along the Thai/Cambodian border.

1985. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (paras. 298-299) highlighted the situation of refugee women as an area of special concern.

1986. The International NGO Working Group on Refugee Women was set up by various NGOs.

1988. The NGO Working Group convened an International Consultation on Refugee Women at Geneva.

1990. A meeting of experts on refugee women and children was convened by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, UNHCR and UNIFEM at Vienna in July.

1990. UNHCR developed a policy seeking to integrate the needs and resources of refugee women in all aspects of its assistance. The policy promotes the participation of refugee women in the planning and implementation of projects.

1991. "Refugees and displaced women and children" is a priority theme for the session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, meeting at Vienna from 27 February to 8 March.

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